



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

MICHIGAN MAN SENTENCED TO 110 MONTHS ON 30 COUNTS OF ALIEN SMUGGLING

DETROIT— United States Attorney Craig S. Morford and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Special Agent-in-Charge Brian Moskowitz jointly announced that Kole Vushaj, age 35, who is a resident of Macomb, Michigan, was sentenced Monday in federal court in Detroit to 110 months imprisonment following conviction on 30 counts of alien smuggling and related offenses, and one count of assaulting a U.S. Border Patrol agent.

Monday's sentence follows Vushaj's June 22 guilty plea.

During his plea, Vushaj admitted the following essential facts of separate incidents:

On January 27, Vushaj, and others he conspired with, smuggled 13 illegal aliens from Sarnia, Ontario via train to Port Huron, Mich. The aliens were from China, Albania, Belgium, and Yugoslavia. Specifically, after Vushaj's associates placed the aliens on the train in Sarnia, Ontario, Vushaj met the aliens inside the train yard adjacent to Upton St. in Port Huron. The aliens arrived on a train on the fourth track away from defendant's vehicle. Vushaj met the aliens and guided them by foot (approximately one-quarter mile) from the train car to his waiting vehicle. While proceeding to his vehicle, the aliens were required to cross over active train tracks, and climb under trains inside the train yard on active tracks. Had one of those trains moved, which was a possibility, the aliens would have been severely injured or killed. Vushaj loaded the 13 illegal aliens into his waiting vehicle and was subsequently stopped by the U.S. Border Patrol.

On Friday, March 19 a lone Border Patrol agent was working near the Detroit-Windsor Train Tunnel in Detroit. The agent conducted a routine inspection of a Canadian Pacific freight train that had just entered the United States from Canada. There he encountered Vushaj, who was attempting to conceal himself inside a hole at the end of a "hopper" car used to carry grain. After ignoring the agent's commands to come out, Vushaj fled on foot. Vushaj threw two baseball-sized portions of brick at the pursuing agent, the second of which nearly struck the agent in the head.

After the agent arrested Vushaj, the freight train was held for a period of time for further inspection. No aliens were found on the train. The train was allowed to continue. On Saturday, March 20, the same CP freight train reached Holland, Mich. Pursuant to a 911 telephone call by a passer-by who heard the aliens inside the train car screaming for help, the police in Holland found two Albanian national illegal aliens on the train (one man and one woman). These aliens had been locked in the train car for approximately 15 hours with no food or water and with minimal clothing. These aliens identified Vushaj as one of the persons that met them in Windsor, Ontario after their family made arrangements with persons for them to be illegally smuggled into the United States from Canada. Vushaj and another male drove the aliens to a train yard in Windsor and placed them into the train car. Vushaj told the aliens that after a short train trip, he would open the door of the train car, which was locked from the outside, and let them out. The train car the aliens were riding in contained a load of lumber originating in Canada.

Prior to imposing sentence, Judge Avern Cohn noted that Vushaj was on probation for alien smuggling when he committed the instant offenses. Cohn also highlighted the risk of death Vushaj caused the aliens and specifically noted that Vushaj was lucky that he was not appearing before the court on a murder charge.

The sentence was imposed under the United States Sentence Guidelines according to the nature of the offense and the criminal background of Vushaj.

“With this sentence ICE ends the illicit career of a significant smuggler of human beings in the Detroit area. As the facts of this case demonstrate, those who smuggle aliens often do so with little regard to the health and safety of their human cargo. To those who seek to illegally enter the United States using the services of a smuggler- be warned – you do so at great risk to both your freedom and your health,” said Moskowitz.

Morford commended Department of Homeland Security's ICE and the Border Patrol for their investigation of the case leading to Vushaj's successful prosecution and Assistant U.S. Attorney John Freeman for his successful prosecution of Vushaj.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security.